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CHILD'S GARDEN
OF
VERSES
—
STEVENSON



GOLDEN
HOUR
SERIES



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GOLDEN HOUR SERIES

A CHILD'S GARDEN
OF
VERSES

BY
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Upon a Time Stories, Approved Selections for Reading
and Memorizing, A Brief Outline of Books I Have
Read, A Brief Outline of My History Lessons, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest task which confronts the little child is the mastering of the mother tongue in its three phases — speech, reading, and writing. In the accomplishment of this task, nothing is so helpful as the hearing and reading of large quantities of suitable poetry. This fact was well known to the people of antiquity. Before the age of writing, the laws and traditions of each tribe were handed down through the medium of verse. Verse was chosen rather than prose, because its form facilitated memorizing and furnished a guarantee of accuracy. When the law or tradition had been once thrown into the poetic form it was difficult to change its meaning without destroying its form and this would at once furnish a test of correctness.

It was in this manner that all the nations of antiquity trained the minds of their young and transmitted to posterity the memory of the deeds done by their heroes, and those laws and rules of conduct which experience had found it necessary to impart to the youthful members of the community. Thus it was that the Greeks preserved to posterity the poems of Homer and the laws of their legislators.

After the invention of writing, the necessity for poetry as a medium for the preservation of fact and tradition, passed away. For purposes of mere utility, prose took its place; yet the poetic form did not fall into disuse. It was found that poetry contained in itself a cultural value which could not be gained from prose. For many generations, the Greek school boy learned by heart the poems of Homer or of Hesiod.

In more recent times, poetry has come to be comparatively neglected. Two or three generations ago there were many persons, some so-called educators, who entirely rejected or neglected poetry as a means of educating the young. This may have been owing in part to the fact that there was not in English literature any considerable body of poetry suitable for the use of very young children. Even in our day, poetry of this class, printed in a form suitable for the home and the school, has not been generally available at a moderate price. It is to remedy this condition in part that this series of books is now offered to the public.

At the present day poetry, as an educational force, is recovering its ancient place in the schools. There are, probably, few or no educators of any standing or reputation whatever who deny its importance, and were these books intended solely for the use of schools, nothing more need be said. Since, however, it is hoped that they may find a place in many homes, it seems fitting to explain

more fully the importance of poetry in the education of the young.

Children should read poetry because they like it. Something within the child responds immediately to the rhythmical beat of the verse. So potent is this instinct, that children put rhythm into sounds which have it not. The tick of a clock is as evenly monotonous as mechanism can make it. Yet to the child it is not tick, tick, tick, tick, but tick, tock'; tick, tock' with a strong ictus upon the second syllable. This feeling for rhythm seems to be a physical, as well as a mental, instinct, originating, probably, in the rhythmical beating of the heart. Thus the very physical life of the child is based upon rhythm. Quite naturally, therefore, he responds most readily to the rhythmical forms of language. The length of the line of verse is also determined by the physical nature of man. A line of poetry is merely a certain number of syllables which can be pronounced comfortably between one breath and another. For most persons, this number is eight or ten, and for this reason verse forms which exceed ten, or at most, twelve syllables to the line have never been and never can become popular. To the child, of course, who breathes more rapidly than the adult, the shorter forms of verse are most suitable.

Rhyme also — a kind of rhythm which comes at longer intervals and marks the end of the line — furnishes a keen pleasure to the child. The gratification furnished

by rhythm and rhyme is quite independent of the sense of the words read. It is for this reason that the very baby who knows scarce half a dozen words is soothed and amused by "Nonsense Verses" and Mother Goose Rhymes. To the potency of such, the experience of every mother will furnish ample testimony.

It is a mistake to suppose that young children should not learn poetry which they cannot fully understand. Every child, not hopelessly dull, when he begins to attain a mastery of the mother tongue, delights in using words often entirely without meaning to him. He prattles on all day, repeating the words and sounds which he has learned in an endless variety of combinations. This apparently aimless exercise of the linguistic organs, is Mother Nature's method of training the child to the utterance of intelligible vocal sounds. For this reason, even nonsense rhymes and jingles give the child pleasure, and at the same time develop his power over the linguistic organs.

To some matter-of-fact adults, the child's intense love for rhymes and jingles may seem silly and useless: something to be repressed rather than gratified and encouraged. To such persons it may be worth while to state that modern pedagogy has furnished an explanation of this childish love of verse; an explanation based upon the doctrine of evolution, which is now, in some form or other, accepted by all.

Biologists have found that before birth the human embryo passes through various stages similar to those by which earthly life has evolved. In the beginning it resembles the lowest forms of invertebra from which it ascends to the highest, or vertebrate, forms of animal life. After birth, the child's mental and physical characteristics resemble those of the quadrumana, and later those of the lower races of humanity. The biologists further tell us that each stage is necessary to the fullest development of the individual. In short, the child does, and should, recapitulate the various stages through which the race has been evolved. This theory is known as the "Culture Epoch Theory," and is generally accepted by modern educators.

Now the child, up to the age of twelve or fourteen, passes through, or recapitulates, the savage and barbarous stages of race-evolution. In those stages the race universally preferred verse to prose, and the child while passing through the same stage exhibits the same preference.

Children should read poetry also because it trains the ear and furnishes a guide to the pronunciation of many words. This is especially true of the more musical forms of verse. Such poetry, when well read, or recited, furnishes a valuable training of the sense for the beautiful in language, which is probably latent in the mind of every normal child. The training thus afforded is closely akin to that furnished by music and is scarcely less valuable. Rhyme, requiring

an identity of sound at the ends of lines sometimes furnishes a valuable key to the pronunciation of words.

Children should read and memorize poetry for the purpose of training the memory and increasing their vocabulary. The use of poetry for these purposes has been approved of in all ages and by all schools of educators. Its value in the training of the verbal memory has been experienced by almost everyone. A poem once thoroughly learned, and afterwards almost forgotten, can be recalled far more easily and completely than could be done in the case of a prose selection of equal length. Besides, it is far more easily learned in the first place. The form of poetry, the measured beat of the rhythm, the regular length of the line, and the recurring harmony of the rhyme, all aid the memory in retaining the words. Thus, in the mind of the child who hears, reads, and learns much poetry, a large and varied stock of words will be accumulated. The importance of this enrichment of the vocabulary can scarcely be over-estimated. One who notices the talk of children will inevitably be astonished at the paucity of the words they are accustomed to use. The elementary school course brings the child into contact with several thousands of words; in their conversations, many of them employ but a few hundred.

Besides the mere hearing, reading, and learning poetry, there is another way in which young persons increase their stock of words and improve their command over

them; that is, by writing rhymes and verses of their own. This practice is far more general than is sometimes supposed. As Hugh Miller says, "Almost every active intelligence during youth has a try at making verse." Conradi found that just fifty per cent of the cases he investigated had tried their hands at original poetry. Benjamin Franklin and many others have recorded their efforts in this direction, and their belief in the efficacy of the practice.

This practice of verse-making should always be commended and encouraged. The effort to find words to fit the rhythm and the rhyme will greatly broaden and enrich the child's stock of words. In this connection it is an interesting fact that almost every master of English prose has, at some time or other, served an apprenticeship as a verse-maker and recorded his belief that this practice is a valuable aid toward the mastering of a good prose style.

Children should read poetry because it furnishes the mind with a store of valuable ideas. The importance of this enrichment of the child's mental content cannot be over-rated. The child is bound to have something going on in his mind. Self-activity is an instinct of the mind as well as of the body, but self-activity demands something to work with. The mind cannot be active *in vacuo* any more than a baseball nine can play the game without the ball. It is the business of the parent and the teacher to put the child's mind into a condition to use good and

elevating ideas rather than those which are evil and debasing. These good ideas can be furnished by the reading of good poetry. While engaged in this the child will not learn to lie, to swear, to fight, to cheat, or to steal.

The importance of implanting good ideas in the child's mind is emphasized by the theory of the human mind held by the philosopher Hume and many others. According to this theory, ideas create the mind. Hume says: "The ideas are themselves the actors, the stage, the theatre the spectators, and the play." Professor James, while not accepting this theory in its entirety, says: "No truth however abstract, is ever perceived, that will not probably at some time or other, influence our earthly actions. . . . Every sort of consciousness, be it sensation, feeling, or idea, tends directly to discharge itself into some motor effect." In other words, our actions are dependent upon our stock of ideas. How important, then, that the ideas with which a child's mind is stocked shall be good, and poetry is the most effective vehicle for the conveyance of good ideas to the mind of the young child.

Children should read poetry because it stimulates and develops the imagination. The imaginative appeal of poetry is known and acknowledged by all. Indeed, it constitutes one of the essential elements of poetry. Now, children, whether we wish it or not, will exercise their imagination. It is, during childhood, the dominant mental faculty. "Of all people children are the most imagina-

tive." The childish imagination, if left to itself, is quite as apt to run to the evil as to the good. Indeed, if we accept the doctrines of a certain school of theologians, it is far more apt to take the downward than the upward path. The only way to check and prevent this downward tendency is by furnishing the child's mind with a store of good ideas, as a basis for the imagination to work upon. If we fill the mind with the good there will be no room for the evil, and in doing this, experience has shown that nothing is so effective as an abundance of good reading, especially the reading of poetry.

To emphasize the importance of this stimulation and training of the imagination, let me add the following definitions:

"The imagination is the organ of the heart and opens up the way for reason." — *G. Stanley Hall*.

"The imagination is that power of the mind which combines and arranges, with more or less symmetry and proportion, that which primarily comes into the mind through the senses." — *Dr. Francis Parker*.

Children should read poetry because it stimulates the emotions and trains the will. The power of poetry over the emotions is due, in part, to its form. The same facts or ideas embodied in prose do not stimulate the emotions in the same manner or to an equal degree. For example,

"Evangeline," in prose, would have quite another effect. Poetry in general does not perhaps excite the passions to the same degree of intensity as some works of fiction. The stimulation produced by good poetry is calmer and more even than that produced by the most vivid pieces of fiction. For this very reason, poetry is better adapted to the training of the will and the character through the emotions, than the more exciting novels. For this reason, too, great care should be exercised in the choice of the prose fiction which a child is allowed to read. On the other hand, there is extant practically no English poetry suitable for children which can be in the slightest degree harmful; certainly none such is to be found in this series.

Now the will, that power which transmutes character into act, is governed mainly by the emotions. The heart is a far more powerful and a readier responding instrument than the head. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

Children should read and memorize poetry because it is the best means of developing the religious nature. On this point I cannot do better than to quote from a speech of Dr. Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University.* He says:

(*Dr. Eliot speaks from the standpoint of a particular church, but what he says is universally applicable.)

“Is there any universally applicable method through which we can insure in little children the unconscious reception of the leading ideas of the (Christian) faith? I believe there is, and I believe that this method should be used in all (Christian) families and all (Christian) churches. It is the method of committing poetry to memory. I heard Dr. Crothers quoting somebody last Sunday to the effect that religion is poetry; but somebody else amended that statement by saying that religion is poetry believed. The amendment is important. Can we put into the childish mind through poetry a religion it will believe? We may be perfectly certain that no child ever got any religion out of a catechism. It takes an adult with the tendency to metaphysics to get anything out of catechism. Will not a child unconsciously get religion out of poetry, if it be well selected? I have seen the experiment tried in a fair number of instances — not enough instances for a general conclusion, but in a fair number of instances — and never knew it to fail. In order to give you an impression of the actual working of the method, I must enter into a few particulars. Take such a poem as Longfellow’s ‘Village Blacksmith,’ a very simple poem of universal sentiments, and let the child, at an appropriate age, commit the whole of it to memory, so that it can recite it whenever asked for. Some of the most fundamental conceptions of religion, some of the most fundamental conceptions of the new science of soci-

ology, will enter the child's mind with that poem. Of course, as in all poetry, a great deal of what we may call information, or suggested knowledge, is conveyed in even a single verse. Take the verse:

“ ‘He hears his daughter's voice
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

“ ‘It sounds to him like her mother's voice
Singing in Paradise.’

“Now the child eight or ten years old will take that all in, and will learn from it that the blacksmith had a daughter who could sing, and she sang sweetly in the village choir; and the blacksmith had had a wife whom he loved tenderly and she was dead, and she sang when with him, and now she was singing in a happy next world, in Paradise; and the blacksmith liked to go to church because he heard his daughter, who reminded him of her mother. All that is in that little verse; and it is a beautiful picture of some of the best parts of human experience.

“Take another poem, very well known to us all, but seldom used, it seems to me, for children: Leigh Hunt's ‘Abou Ben Adhem’ (‘May his tribe increase’)! There is a poem that any child of ten years old will take in, and it presents a series of delightful pictures; and at the end

comes a very compact statement of the whole (Christian) theory about character.

“Another invaluable poem for religious education is Bryant’s ‘Waterfowl.’ The whole (Christian) view of the Providence of God is presented to the child in that lovely poem — God is guiding the bird through the pathless air, and just as he guides the bird he will guide me. It is the simplest possible presentation to a child’s mind of the loving Fatherhood of God.”

The importance of what Dr. Eliot has said is emphasized by the fact that the use of the Bible is not permitted in our public schools. Teachers must therefore take advantage of every opportunity furnished by the literature read or otherwise to “point a moral.” Hitherto our schools have not been sufficiently supplied with literature well fitted to form a basis for moral instruction. This deficiency, it is hoped, these little books will help diminish.

The reading of poetry by the young not only nourishes the mind and develops the moral and religious nature, but it offers the most efficient means of creating a taste for good reading. The modern civilized man is bound to read something, and the field of literature is so broad that it offers material to satisfy the needs and tastes of every intelligence. But, unfortunately, the field of bad literature is equally extensive, and is apt to be preferred by those whose early literary training has been neglected.

Unfortunately, too, a taste for good reading is generally formed early in life or not at all. Early, far too early, the harsh hand of stern necessity or the flattering caress of frivolous pleasure is laid upon youth to deflect it from the laborious but profitable path which leads to true culture. Let parents and teachers, therefore, look to it that the feet of the young child are early set in the straight path which leads to the Elysian fields of good literature.

MELVIN HIX.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Robert Louis Stevenson was born at Edinburgh, November 13, 1850. He died at Apia, Samoa, December 3, 1894. His father, Thomas S. Stevenson, was an engineer in the Scotch lighthouse service.

Mr. Stevenson wished his son to become a civil engineer. Robert accordingly spent three and a half years at the University of Edinburgh in preparation for that profession. At the end of that time he decided to give up engineering and began the study of law. In July, 1875, he was admitted to practice.

At the age of twenty-three he was attacked by consumption, a disease from which he never entirely recovered. By the orders of his physician, he spent the following winter in the South of France. Although slightly benefited by the trip, his health remained delicate and, during the remainder of his life, he spent a great part of his time wandering from country to country seeking a climate which would restore his health, or, at least, check the progress of disease. He visited the United States several times. In California he met Mrs. Mary Osbourne, a widow, to whom he was married in the spring of 1880.

In 1888 he chartered a yacht for a voyage among the tropical islands of the Pacific. After a delightful cruise lasting several months, he returned to Scotland, but, finding that he could not endure the severe climate of that country, he decided to establish himself at Apia, on the island of Samoa, where he died four years later.

The character of Robert Louis Stevenson can scarcely be too highly praised. Living constantly in the very Valley of the Shadow of Death, he faced life bravely and cheerfully. Always extremely polite to others, his politeness was merely the outward expression of a kindly heart. Wherever he went he made friends and such was the evenness of his genial disposition that the friends he made he kept. When other men would have given up all labor, he kept steadily at work at his self-chosen profession — the writing of books; and such was his command over himself, that the sickliness of his body never tainted the products of his mind.

From his earliest boyhood he wished to become a writer. He was not a genius, but by diligence and perseverance he became one of the great writers of his time. In one of his delightful essays he describes his method of learning to write. He says:

“All through my boyhood and youth, I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket,

one to read, one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words; when I sat by the roadside, I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version-book would be in my hand, to note down the features of the scene or commemorate some halting stanza. Thus I lived with words. And what I thus wrote was for no ulterior use, it was written consciously for practice. It was not so much that I wished to be an author (though I wished that, too) as that I had vowed that I would learn to write. That was a proficiency that tempted me; and I practiced to acquire it, as men learn to whittle, in a wager with myself. Description was the principle field of my exercise: for to any one with senses there is always something worth describing, and town and country are but one continuous subject.

“That, like it or not, is the way to learn to write; whether I have profited or not, that is the way. It was so Keats learned, and there was never a finer temperament for literature than Keats’s; it was so, if we would trace it out, that all men have learned. . . . Perhaps I hear some one cry out: ‘But this is not the way to be original.’ It is not; nor is there any way but to be born so. Nor yet, if you are born original, is there anything in this training that shall clip the wings of your originality.”

At first, notwithstanding all his care and diligence, Stevenson found it difficult to get his writings published; and when, at last, his work began to find place

in British magazines, it was not received with any great degree of favor. By dint of pluck and perseverance he gradually gained in public favor, and finally became one of the popular writers of his day. His earlier works consisted of essays and romances. Of the latter "Treasure Island," a book of adventure, is most widely known.

In 1885 he published "A Child's Garden of Verses," and later two or three other volumes of poetry. Of all his verse, his first volume was, by far, the best. Of this volume, Mr. E. C. Stedman, than whom no one is a more competent judge, speaks as follows:

"Now, as a minor but genuine example of poetic art, not alone for art's sake, but for dear nature's sake — in the light of whose maternal smile all art must thrive and blossom if at all — take 'A Child's Garden of Verses,' by Stevenson. This is a real addition to the lore for children, and to that for man, to whom the child is father. The flowers of this little garden spring from the surplusage of a genius that creates nothing void of charm and originality. Thanks, then, for the fresh, pure touch, for the revelation of childhood with its vision of the lands of Nod and Counterpane, and of those next-door Foreign Lands spied from cherry-tree top, and beyond the trellised wall."

A Child's Garden of Verses

TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

(FROM HER BOY)

For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake:
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land:
For all the story-books you read:
For all the pains you comforted:
For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore: —
My second Mother, my first Wife,
The angel of my infant life —
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read
May find as dear a nurse at need,
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,
May hear it in as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice!

TO MY MOTHER

You, too, my mother, read my rhymes
For love of unforgotten times,
And you may chance to hear once more
The little feet along the floor.

AT THE SEASIDE

When I was down beside the sea
A wooden spade they gave to me
To dig the sandy shore.
My holes were empty like a cup,
In every hole the sea came up,
Till it could come no more.

TIME TO RISE

A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon the window-sill,
Cocked his shining eye and said:
“Ain’t you ’shamed, you sleepy-head?”

A THOUGHT

It is very nice to think
The world is full of meat and drink,
With little children saying grace
In every Christian kind of place.

WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN

A child should always say what’s true
And speak when he is spoken to,
And behave mannerly at table:
At least as far as he is able.

HAPPY THOUGHT

The world is so full of a number of things,
I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings.

AUNTIE'S SKIRTS

Whenever Auntie moves around
Her dresses make a curious sound,
They trail behind her on the floor,
And trundle after through the door.

SYSTEM

Every night my prayers I say,
And get my dinner every day;
And every day that I've been good,
I get an orange after food.

The child that is not clean and neat,
With lots of toys and things to eat,
He is a naughty child, I'm sure —
Or else his dear papa is poor.

LOOKING FORWARD

When I am grown to man's estate
I shall be very proud and great,
And tell the other girls and boys
Not to meddle with my toys.

RAIN

The rain is raining all around,
It falls on field and tree,
It rains on the umbrellas here,
And on the ships at sea.

THE COW

The friendly cow all red and white,
I love with all my heart:
She gives me cream with all her might,
To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,
And yet she cannot stray,
All in the pleasant open air,
The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass
And wet with all the showers,
She walks among the meadow grass
And eats the meadow flowers.

A GOOD BOY

I woke before the morning,
I was happy all the day,
I never said an ugly word,
But smiled and stuck to play.

And now at last the sun
Is going down behind the wood,
And I am very happy,
For I know that I've been good.

My bed is waiting cool and fresh,
With linen smooth and fair,
And I must off to sleeps-in-by,
And not forget my prayer.

I know that, till to-morrow
I shall see the sun arise,
No ugly dream shall fright my mind,
No ugly sight my eyes.

But slumber hold me tightly
Till I waken in the dawn,
And hear the thrushes singing
In the lilacs round the lawn.

THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside —

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown —
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN

Children, you are very little,
And your bones are very brittle;
If you would grow great and stately,
You must try to walk sedately.

You must still be bright and quiet,
And content with simple diet;
And remain, through all bewild'ring,
Innocent and honest children.

Happy hearts and happy faces,
Happy play in grassy places —
That was how, in ancient ages,
Children grew to kings and sages.

But the unkind and the unruly,
And the sort who eat unduly,
They must never hope for glory —
Theirs is quite a different story!

Cruel children, crying babies,
All grow up as geese and gabies,
Hated, as their age increases,
By their nephews and their nieces.

THE SUN'S TRAVELS

The sun is not a-bed when I
At night upon my pillow lie;
Still round the earth his way he takes,
And morning after morning makes.

While here at home, in shining day,
We round the sunny garden play,
Each little Indian sleepy-head
Is being kissed and put to bed.

And when at eve I rise from tea,
Day dawns beyond the Atlantic Sea;
And all the children in the West
Are getting up and being dressed.

MARCHING SONG

Bring the comb and play upon it!
Marching, here we come!
Willie cocks his highland bonnet,
Johnnie beats the drum.

Mary Jane commands the party,
Peter leads the rear;
Feet in time, alert and hearty,
Each a Grenadier!

All in the most martial manner
Marching double-quick;
While the napkin like a banner
Waves upon the stick!

Here's enough of fame and pillage,
Great commander Jane!
Now that we've been round the village,
Let's go home again.

A GOOD PLAY

We built a ship upon the stairs
All made of the back-bedroom chairs,
And filled it full of sofa pillows
To go a-sailing on the billows.

We took a saw and several nails,
And water in the nursery pails;
And Tom said, "Let us also take
An apple and a slice of cake"; —
Which was enough for Tom and me
To go a-sailing on, till tea.

We sailed along for days and days,
And had the very best of plays;
But Tom fell out and hurt his knee,
So there was no one left but me.

MY SHADOW

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I
can see.

He is very, very like me from the heels up to
the head;
And I see him jump before me when I jump
into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes
to grow —
Not at all like proper children, which is always
very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an India-
rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none
of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to
play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort
of way.

He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you
can see;

I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow
sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every butter-
cup;

But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-
head,

Had stayed at home behind me and was fast
asleep in bed.

FAIRY BREAD

Come up here, O dusty feet!

Here is fairy bread to eat;

Here in my retiring room,

Children, you may dine

On the golden smell of broom

And the shade of pine;

And when you have eaten well,

Fairy stories hear and tell.

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills.

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

THE WIND

I saw you toss the kites on high
And blow the birds about the sky;
And all around I heard you pass,
Like ladies' skirts across the grass —

O wind, a-blowing all day long!

O wind, that sings so loud a song!

I saw the different things you did,
But always you yourself you hid.
I felt you push, I heard you call,
I could not see yourself at all —

O wind, a-blowing all day long,

O wind, that sings so loud a song!

O you that are so strong and cold,
O blower, are you young or old?
Are you a beast of field and tree,
Or just a stronger child than me?

O wind, a-blowing all day long,

O wind, that sings so loud a song!

SUMMER SUN

Great is the sun, and wide he goes
Through empty heaven without repose;
And in the blue and glowing days
More thick than rain he showers his rays.

Though closer still the blinds we pull
To keep the shady parlor cool,
Yet he will find a chink or two
To slip his golden fingers through.

The dusty attic spider-clad
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;
And through the broken edge of tiles,
Into the laddered hayloft smiles.

Meantime his golden face around
He bares to all the garden ground,
And sheds a warm and glittering look
Among the ivy's inmost nook.

Above the hills, along the blue,
Round the bright air with footing true,
To please the child, to paint the rose,
The gardener of the World, he goes.

THE MOON

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
She shines on the thieves on the garden wall,
On streets and fields and harbor quays,
And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,
The howling dog by the door of the house,
The bat that lies in bed at noon,
All love to be out by the light of the moon.

But all of the things that belong to the day
Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;
And flowers and children close their eyes
Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.

WINTER-TIME

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.

BED IN SUMMER

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

NIGHT AND DAY

When the golden day is done,
Through the closing portal,
Child and garden, flower and sun,
Vanish all things mortal.

As the blinding shadows fall,
As the rays diminish,
Under evening's cloak, they all
Roll away and vanish.

Garden darkened, daisy shut,
Child in bed, they slumber —
Glow-worm in the highway rut,
Mice among the lumber.

In the darkness houses shine,
Parents move with candles;
Till on all, the night divine
Turns the bedroom handles.

Till at last the day begins
In the east a-breaking,
In the hedges and the whins
Sleeping birds a-waking.

In the darkness shapes of things,
Houses, trees and hedges,
Clearer grow; and sparrows' wings
Beat on window ledges.

These shall wake the yawning maid;
She the door shall open —
Finding dew on garden glade
And the morning broken.

There my garden grows again
Green and rosy painted,
As at eve behind the pane
From my eyes it fainted.

Just as it was shut away,
Toy-like, in the even,
Here I see it glow with day
Under glowing heaven.

Every path and every plot,
Every bush of roses,
Every blue forget-me-not
Where the dew reposes,

“Up!” they cry, “the day is come
On the smiling valleys;
We have beat the morning drum;
Playmate, join your allies!”

SINGING

Of speckled eggs the birdie sings
And nests among the trees;
The sailor sings of ropes and things
In ships upon the seas.

The children sing in far Japan,
The children sing in Spain;
The organ with the organ man
Is singing in the rain.

MY BED IS A BOAT

My bed is like a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She girds me in my sailor's coat
And starts me in the dark.

At night, I go on board and say
Good-night to all my friends on shore;
I shut my eyes and sail away
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,
As prudent sailors have to do;
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;
But when the day returns at last,
Safe in my room, beside the pier,
I find my vessel fast.

YOUNG NIGHT THOUGHT

All night long and every night,
When my mamma puts out the light,
I see the people marching by,
As plain as day, before my eye.

Armies and emperors and kings,
All carrying different kinds of things,
And marching in so grand a way,
You never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen
At the great circus on the green;
For every kind of beast and man
Is marching in that caravan.

At first they move a little slow,
But still the faster on they go,
And still beside them close I keep,
Until we reach the Town of Sleep.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at tea-time and before you take
your seat,

With lantern and with ladder he comes posting
up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger, and can choose what
I'm to do,

O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the
lamps with you.

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the
door,

And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many
more;

And O! before you hurry by with ladder and
with light,

O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-
night!

THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS

At evening when the lamp is lit,
Around the fire my parents sit;
They sit at home and talk and sing,
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl
All in the dark along the wall,
And follow round the forest track
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,
These are my starry solitudes;
And there the river by whose brink
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away
As if in firelit camp they lay,
And I, like to an Indian scout,
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,
Home I return across the sea,
And go to bed with backward looks
At my dear Land of Story-books.

ARMIES IN THE FIRE

The lamps now glitter down the street;
Faintly sound the falling feet;
And the blue even slowly falls
About the garden trees and walls.

Now in the falling of the gloom
The red fire paints the empty room:
And warmly on the roof it looks,
And flickers on the backs of books.

Armies march by tower and spire
Of cities blazing, in the fire; —
Till as I gaze with staring eyes,
The armies fade, the lustre dies.

Then once again the glow returns;
Again the phantom city burns;
And down the red-hot valley, lo!
The phantom armies marching go!

Blinking embers, tell me true
Where are those armies marching to,
And what the burning city is
That crumbles in your furnaces!

ESCAPE AT BEDTIME

The lights from the parlor and kitchen shone out
Through the blinds and the windows and bars;
And high overhead and all moving about,
There were thousands of millions of stars.

There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a
tree,
Nor of people in church or the Park,
As the crowds of the stars that looked down
upon me,
And that glittered and winked in the dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,
And the star of the sailor, and Mars,
These shone in the sky, and the pail by the wall
Would be half full of water and stars.

They saw me at last, and they chased me with
cries,
And they soon had me packed into bed;
But the glory kept shining and bright in my eyes,
And the stars going round in my head.

THE LAND OF NOD

From breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the Land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do —
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the Land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

NORTH-WEST PASSAGE

I. GOOD-NIGHT

When the bright lamp is carried in,
The sunless hours again begin;
O'er all without, in field and lane,
The haunted night returns again.

Now we behold the embers flee
About the firelit hearth; and see
Our faces painted as we pass,
Like pictures, on the window-glass.

Must we to bed indeed? Well, then,
Let us arise and go like men,
And face with an undaunted tread
The long black passage up to bed.

Farewell, O brother, sister, sire!
O pleasant party round the fire!
The songs you sing, the tales you tell,
Till far to-morrow, fare ye well!

II. SHADOW MARCH

All round the house is the jet-black night;
It stares through the window-pane;
It crawls in the corners, hiding from the light,
And it moves with the moving flame.

Now my little heart goes a-beating like a drum,
With the breath of the Bogie in my hair,
And all round the candle the crooked shadows
come,
And go marching along up the stair.

The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of the
lamp,
The shadow of the child that goes to bed —
All the wicked shadows coming, tramp, tramp,
tramp,
With the black night overhead.

III. IN PORT

Last, to the chamber where I lie
My fearful footsteps patter nigh,
And come from out the cold and gloom
Into my warm and cheerful room.

There, safe arrived, we turn about
To keep the coming shadows out,
And close the happy door at last
On all the perils that we past.

Then, when mamma goes by to bed,
She shall come in with tip-toe tread,
And see me lying warm and fast
And in the Land of Nod at last.

KEEPSAKE MILL

Over the borders, a sin without pardon,
Breaking the branches and crawling below,
Out through the breach in the wall of the garden,
Down by the banks of the river we go.

Here is the mill with the humming of thunder,
Here is the weir with the wonder of foam,
Here is the sluice with the race running under—
Marvelous places, though handy to home!

Sounds of the village grow stiller and stiller,
Stiller the note of the birds on the hill;
Dusty and dim are the eyes of the miller,
Deaf are his ears with the moil of the mill.

Years may go by, and the wheel in the river
Wheel as it wheels for us, children, to-day,
Wheel and keep roaring and foaming forever —
Long after all of the boys are away.

Home from the Indies and home from the ocean,
Heroes and soldiers we all shall come home;
Still we shall find the old mill wheel in motion,
Turning and churning that river to foam.

You with the bean that I gave when we quarreled,
I with your marble of Saturday last,
Honored and old and all gaily appareled,
Here we shall meet and remember the past.

NEST EGGS

Birds all the sunny day flutter and quarrel
Here in the arbor-like tent of the laurel.

Here in the fork the brown nest is seated;
Four little blue eggs the mother keeps heated.

While we stand watching her, staring like gabies,
Safe in each egg are the bird's little babies.

Soon the frail eggs they shall chip, and up-
springing,

Make all the April woods merry with singing.

Younger than we are, O children, and frailer,
Soon in blue air they'll be, singer and sailor.

We, so much older, taller and stronger,
We shall look down on the birdies no longer.

They shall go flying with musical speeches
High overhead in the tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom and sensible talking,
We on our feet must go plodding and walking.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Dear Uncle Jim, this garden ground
That now you smoke your pipe around,
Has seen immortal actions done
And valiant battles lost and won.

Here we had best on tip-toe tread,
While I for safety march ahead,
For this is that enchanted ground
Where all who loiter slumber sound.

Here is the sea, here is the sand,
Here is the simple Shepherd's Land,
Here are the fairy hollyhocks,
And there are Ali Baba's rocks.

But yonder, see! apart and high,
Frozen Siberia lies; where I,
With Robert Bruce and William Tell,
Was bound by an enchanter's spell.

THE FLOWERS

All the names I know from nurse:
Gardener's garters, Shepherd's purse,
Bachelor's buttons, Lady's smock,
And the Lady Hollyhock.

Fairy places, fairy things,
Fairy woods where the wild bee wings,
Tiny trees for tiny dames —
These must all be fairy names!

Tiny woods below whose boughs
Shady fairies weave a house;
Tiny tree-tops, rose or thyme,
Where the braver fairies climb!

Fair are grown-up people's trees,
But the fairest woods are these;
Where, if I were not so tall,
I should live for good and all.

THE GARDENER

The gardener does not love to talk,
He makes me keep the gravel walk;
And when he puts his tools away,
He locks the door and takes the key.

Away behind the currant row
Where no one else but cook may go,
Far in the plots, I see him dig,
Old and serious, brown and big.

He digs the flowers, green, red and blue,
Nor wishes to be spoken to.
He digs the flowers and cuts the hay,
And never seems to want to play.

Silly gardener! summer goes,
And winter comes with pinching toes,
When in the garden bare and brown
You must lay your barrow down.

Well now, and while the summer stays,
To profit by these garden days,
O how much wiser you would be
To play at Indian wars with me!

AUTUMN FIRES

In the other gardens,
And all up the vale,
From the autumn bonfires
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over,
And all the summer flowers,
The red fire blazes,
The gray smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!
Something bright in all!
Flowers in the summer,
Fires in the fall!

MY TREASURES

These nuts, that I keep in the back of the nest
Where all my lead soldiers are lying at rest,
Were gathered in autumn by nursie and me
In a wood with a well by the side of the sea.

This whistle we made (and how clearly it
sounds!)

By the side of a field at the end of the grounds;
Of a branch of a plane, with a knife of my own,
It was nursie who made it, and nursie alone!

The stone, with the white and the yellow and
gray,

We discovered I cannot tell *how* far away;
And I carried it back, although weary and cold,
For though father denies it, I'm sure it is gold.

But of all my treasures the last is the king,
For there's very few children possess such a
thing;

And that is a chisel, both handle and blade,
Which a man who was really a carpenter made.

THE DUMB SOLDIER

When the grass was closely mown,
Walking on the lawn alone,
In the turf a hole I found
And hid a soldier underground.

Spring and daisies come apace;
Grasses hide my hiding place;
Grasses run like a green sea
O'er the lawn up to my knee.

Under grass alone he lies,
Looking up with leaden eyes,
Scarlet coat and pointed gun,
To the stars and to the sun.

When the grass is ripe like grain,
When the scythe is stoned again,
When the lawn is shaven clear,
Then my hole shall reappear.

I shall find him, never fear,
I shall find my grenadier;
But for all that's gone and come,
I shall find my soldier dumb.

He has lived, a little thing,
In the grassy woods of spring;
Done, if he could tell me true,
Just as I should like to do.

He has seen the starry hours
And the springing of the flowers;
And the fairy things that pass
In the forests of the grass.

In the silence he has heard
Talking bee and ladybird,
And the butterfly has flown
O'er him as he lay alone.

Not a word will he disclose,
Not a word of all he knows.
I must lay him on the shelf,
And make up the tale myself.

PICTURE-BOOKS IN WINTER

Summer fading, winter comes —
Frosty mornings, tingling thumbs,
Window robins, winter rooks,
And the picture story-books.

Water now is turned to stone
Nurse and I can walk upon;
Still we find the flowing brooks
In the picture story-books.

All the pretty things put by,
Wait upon the children's eye,
Sheep and shepherds, trees and crooks,
In the picture-story-books.

We may see how all things are
Seas and cities, near and far,
And the flying fairies' looks,
In the picture story-books.

How am I to sing your praise,
Happy chimney-corner days,
Sitting safe in nursery nooks,
Reading picture story-books?

WINDY NIGHTS

Whenever the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

PIRATE STORY

Three of us afloat in the meadow by the swing,
Three of us aboard in the basket on the lea.
Winds are in the air, they are blowing in the
spring,
And waves are on the meadow like the waves
there are at sea.

Where shall we adventure, to-day that we're
afloat,
Wary of the weather and steering by a star?
Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the boat,
To Providence, or Babylon, or off to Malabar?

Hi! but here's a squadron a-rowing on the sea—
Cattle on the meadow a-charging with a roar!
Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as mad
as they can be,
The wicket is the harbor and the garden is the
shore.

BLOCK CITY

What are you able to build with your blocks?
Castles and palaces, temples and docks.
Rain may keep raining, and others go roam,
But I can be happy and building at home.

Let the sofa be mountain, the carpet be sea,
There I'll establish a city for me:
A kirk and a mill and a palace beside,
And a harbor as well where my vessels may ride.

Great is the palace with pillar and wall,
A sort of a tower on the top of it all,
And steps coming down in an orderly way
To where my toy vessels lie safe in the bay.

This one is sailing and that one is moored:
Hark to the song of the sailors on board!
And see on the steps of my palace, the kings
Coming and going with presents and things!

Now I have done with it, down let it go!
All in a moment the town is laid low.
Block upon block lying scattered and free,
What is there left of my town by the sea?

Yet as I saw it, I see it again,
The kirk and the palace, the ships and the men,
And as long as I live and where'er I may be,
I'll always remember my town by the sea.

LOOKING-GLASS RIVER

Smooth it slides upon its travel,
Here a wimple, there a gleam —
O the clean gravel!
O the smooth stream!

Sailing blossoms, silver fishes,
Paven pools as clear as air —
How a child wishes
To live down there!

We can see our colored faces
Floating on the shaken pool
Down in cool places,
Dim and very cool;

Till a wind or water wrinkle,
Dipping marten, plumping trout,
Spreads in a wrinkle
And blots all out.

See the rings pursue each other;
All below grows black as night,
Just as if mother
Had blown out the light!

Patience, children, just a minute —
See the spreading circles die;
The stream and all in it
Will clear by-and-by.

WHERE GO THE BOATS?

Dark brown is the river,
 Golden is the sand.
It flows along for ever,
 With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
 Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating —
 Where will all come home?

On goes the river
 And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
 Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
 A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
 Shall bring my boats ashore.

MY SHIP AND I

O it's I that am the captain of a tidy little ship,
Of a ship that goes a-sailing on the pond;
And my ship it keeps a-turning all around and
all about;
But when I'm a little older, I shall find the
secret out
How to send my vessel sailing on beyond.

For I mean to grow as little as the dolly at the
helm,
And the dolly I intend to come alive;
And with him beside to help me, it's a-sailing I
shall go,
It's a-sailing on the water, when the jolly breezes
blow
And the vessel goes a divie-divie-dive.

O it's then you'll see me sailing through the
rushes and the reeds,
And you'll hear the water singing at the prow;

For beside the dolly sailor, I'm to voyage and
explore,
To land upon the island where no dolly was
before,
And to fire the penny cannon in the bow.

MY KINGDOM

Down by a shining water well
I found a very little dell,
No higher than my head.
The heather and the gorse about
In summer bloom were coming out,
Some yellow and some red.

I called the little pool a sea;
The little hills were big to me;
For I am very small.
I made a boat, I made a town,
I searched the caverns up and down,
And named them one and all.

And all about was mine, I said,
The little sparrows overhead,
 The little minnows, too.
This was the world and I was king,
For me the bees came by to sing,
 For me the swallows flew.

I played there were no deeper seas,
Nor any wider plains than these,
 Nor other kings than me.
At last I heard my mother call
Out from the house at evenfall,
 To call me home to tea.

And I must rise and leave my dell,
And leave my dimpled water well,
 And leave my heather blooms.
Alas! and as my home I neared,
How very big my nurse appeared,
 How great and cool the rooms!

THE HAYLOFT

Through all the pleasant meadow-side
The grass grew shoulder-high,
Till the shining scythes went far and wide
And cut it down to dry.

These green and sweetly smelling crops
They led in wagons home;
And they piled them here in mountain-tops
For mountaineers to roam.

Here is Mount Clear, Mount Rusty-Nail,
Mount Eagle and Mount High; —
The mice that in these mountains dwell,
No happier are than I!

O what a joy to clamber there,
O what a place for play,
With the sweet, the dim, the dusty air,
The happy hills of hay!

THE LITTLE LAND

When at home alone I sit,
And am very tired of it,
I have just to shut my eyes
To go sailing through the skies —
To go sailing far away
To the pleasant Land of Play;
To the fairy land afar
Where the Little People are;
Where the clover-tops are trees,
And the rain-pools are the seas,
And the leaves like little ships
Sail about on tiny trips;
And above the daisy tree
Through the grasses,
High o'erhead the Bumble Bee
Hums and passes.

In that forest to and fro
I can wander, I can go;
See the spider and the fly,
And the ants go marching by

Carrying parcels with their feet
Down the green and grassy street.
I can in the sorrel sit,
Where the ladybird alit.
I can climb the jointed grass;
And on high
See the greater swallows pass
In the sky,
And the round sun rolling by
Heeding no such things as I.

Through that forest I can pass
Till, as in a looking-glass,
Humming fly and daisy tree
And my tiny self I see,
Painted very clear and neat
On the rain-pool at my feet.
Should a leaflet come to land
Drifting near to where I stand,
Straight I'll board that tiny boat
Round the rain-pool sea to float.

Little thoughtful creatures sit
On the grassy coasts of it;
Little things with lovely eyes
See me sailing with surprise.
Some are clad in armor green —
(These have sure to battle been!) —
Some are pied with ev'ry hue,
Black and crimson, gold and blue;
Some have wings and swift are gone;—
But they all look kindly on.

When my eyes I once again
Open, and see all things plain;
High bare walls, great bare floor;
Great big knobs on drawer and door;
Great big people perched on chairs,
Stitching tucks and mending tears,
Each a hill that I could climb,
And talking nonsense all the time —
O dear me,
That I could be
A sailor on the rain-pool sea,

A climber in the clover tree,
And just come back, a sleepy-head,
Late at night to go to bed.

THE UNSEEN PLAYMATE

When children are playing alone on the green,
In comes the playmate that never was seen.
When children are happy and lonely and good,
The Friend of the Children comes out of the
wood.

Nobody heard him and nobody saw,
His is the picture you never could draw,
But he's sure to be present, abroad or at home,
When children are happy and playing alone.

He lies in the laurels, he runs on the grass,
He sings when you tinkle the musical glass;
Whene'er you are happy and cannot tell why,
The Friend of the Children is sure to be by!

He loves to be little, he hates to be big,
'Tis he that inhabits the caves that you dig;
'Tis he when you play with your soldiers of tin
That sides with the Frenchmen and never can win.

'Tis he, when at night you go off to your bed,
Bids you go to your sleep and not trouble your
head;
For wherever they're lying, in cupboard or shelf,
'Tis he will take care of your playthings himself!

TO AUNTIE

Chief of our aunts — not only I,
But all your dozen of nurselings cry —
What did the other children do?
And what were childhood, wanting you?

FAREWELL TO THE FARM

The coach is at the door at last;
The eager children, mounting fast
And kissing hands, in chorus sing:
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!

To house and garden, field and lawn,
The meadow-gates we swang upon,
To pump and stable, tree and swing,
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!

And fare you well for evermore,
O ladder at the hayloft door,
O hayloft where the cobwebs cling,
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!

Crack goes the whip, and off we go;
The trees and houses smaller grow;
Last, round the woody turn we swing:
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!

TRAVEL

I should like to rise and go
Where the golden apples grow; —
Where below another sky
Parrot islands anchored lie,
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,
Lonely Crusoes building boats; —
Where in sunshine reaching out
Eastern cities, miles about,
Are with mosque and minaret
Among sandy gardens set,
And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar; —
Where the Great Wall round China
 goes,
And on one side the desert blows,
And with bell and voice and drum,
Cities on the other hum; —
Where are forests, hot as fire,
Wide as England, tall as a spire,
Full of apes and cocoanuts
And the negro hunters' huts; —

Where the knotty crocodile
Lies and blinks in the Nile,
And the red flamingo flies
Hunting fish before his eyes; —
Where in jungles, near and far,
Man-devouring tigers are,
Lying close and giving ear
Lest the hunt be drawing near,
Or a comer-by be seen
Swinging in a palanquin; —
Where among the desert sands
Some deserted city stands,
All its children, sweep and prince,
Grown to manhood ages since,
Not a foot in street or house,
Not a stir of child or mouse,
And when kindly falls the night,
In all the town no spark of light.
There I'll come when I'm a man,
With a camel caravan;
Light a fire in the gloom
Of some dusty dining room;

See the pictures on the walls,
Heroes, fights and festivals;
And in a corner find the toys
Of the old Egyptian boys.

TO ANY READER.

As from the house your mother sees
You playing round the garden trees,
So you may see, if you will look
Through the windows of this book,
Another child, far, far away,
And in another garden, play.
But do not think you can at all,
By knocking on the window, call
That child to hear you. He intent
Is all on his play-business bent.
He does not hear; he will not look,
Nor yet be lured out of this book.
For, long ago, the truth to say,
He has grown up and gone away,
And it is but a child of air
That lingers in the garden there.

FROM A RAILWAY CARRIAGE

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle,
All through the meadows the horses and cattle.

All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and scrambles —
All by himself and gathering brambles;
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!

Here is a cart run away in the road
Lumping along with man and load;
And here is a mill and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone for ever!

FOREIGN LANDS

Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping into town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairyland,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.

FOREIGN CHILDREN

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
Oh! don't you wish that you were me?

You have seen the scarlet trees
And the lions over seas;
You have eaten ostrich eggs,
And turned the turtles off their legs.

Such a life is very fine,
But it's not so nice as mine:
You must often, as you trod,
Have wearied *not* to be abroad.

You have curious things to eat,
I am fed on proper meat;
You must dwell beyond the foam,
But I am safe and live at home.

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
Oh! don't you wish that you were me?

TO MINNIE

The red room with the giant bed
Where none but elders laid their head;
The little room where you and I
Did for a while together lie
And, simple suitor, I your hand
In decent marriage did demand;
The great day nursery, best of all,
With pictures pasted on the wall
And leaves upon the blind —

A pleasant room wherein to wake
And hear the leafy garden shake
 And rustle in the wind —
And pleasant there to lie in bed
 And see the pictures overhead —
The wars about Sebastopol,
The grinning guns along the wall,
 The daring escalade,
The plunging ships, the bleating sheep,
The happy children ankle-deep
 And laughing as they wade:
All these are vanished clean away,
And the old manse is changed to-day;
It wears an altered face
And shields a stranger race.
The river, on from mill to mill,
Flows past our childhood's garden still;
But ah! we children never more
Shall watch if from the water-door!
Below the yew — it still is there —
Our phantom voices haunt the air
As we were still at play,

And I can hear them call and say:
“How far is it to Babylon?”

Ah, far enough, my dear,
Far, far enough from here —
Yet you have farther gone!
“Can I get there by candle-light?”

So goes the old refrain.
I do not know — perchance you might —
But only, children, hear it right,
Ah, never to return again!
The eternal dawn, beyond a doubt,
Shall break on hill and plain,
And put all stars and candles out
Ere we be young again.

To you in distant India, these
I send across the seas,
Nor count it far across.
For which of us forgets
The Indian cabinets,
The bones of antelope, the wings of albatross,
The pied and painted birds and beans,

The junks and bangles, beads and screens,
The gods and sacred bells,
And the loud-humming, twisted shells!
The level of the parlor floor
Was honest, homely, Scottish shore;
But when we climbed upon a chair,
Behold the gorgeous East was there!
Be this a fable; and behold
Me in the parlor as of old,
And Minnie just above me set
In the quaint Indian cabinet!
Smiling and kind, you grace a shelf
Too high for me to reach myself.
Reach down a hand, my dear, and take
These rhymes for old acquaintance sake.

TO MY NAME-CHILD.

Some day soon this rhyming volume, if you
learn with proper speed,
Little Louis Sanchez, will be given you to read.
Then shall you discover, that your name was
printed down
By the English printers, long before, in London
town.

In the great and busy city where the East and
West are met,
All the little letters did the English printer set;
While you thought of nothing, and were still
too young to play,
Foreign people thought of you in places far away.

Ay, and while you slept, a baby, over all the
English lands
Other little children took the volume in their
hands;

Other children questioned, in their homes across
the seas:

Who was little Louis, won't you tell us, mother,
please?

Now that you have spelt your lesson, lay it down
and go and play,

Seeking shells and seaweed on the sands of
Monterey,

Watching all the mighty whalebones, lying buried
by the breeze,

Tiny sandy-pipers, and the huge Pacific seas.

And remember in your playing, as the sea-fog
rolls to you,

Long ere you could read it, how I told you what
to do;

And that while you thought of no one, nearly
half the world away

Some one thought of Louis on the beach of
Monterey!

TO WILLIE AND HENRIETTA.

If two may read aright
These rhymes of old delight
And house and garden play,
You two, my cousins, and you only, may.

You in a garden green
With me were king and queen,
Were hunter, soldier, tar,
And all the thousand things that children are.

Now in the elders' seat
We rest with quiet feet,
And from the window-bay
We watch the children, our successors, play.

"Time was," the golden head
Irrevocably said;
But time which none can bind,
While flowing fast away, leaves love behind.

ENVOY.

Go, little book, and wish to all
Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall,
A bin of wine, a spice of wit,
A house with lawns enclosing it,
A living river by the door,
A nightingale in the sycamore!

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